United Nations E/CN.5/1999/L.3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
22 January 1999

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Thirty-seventh session
9–19 February 1999
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Status of documentation for the session

Note by the Secretariat

1. By Economic and Social Council resolutions 1979/1 and 1979/69 on the control and limitation of documentation and 1988/77 on the revitalization of the Council, the Council reiterated that the Secretariat should circulate the relevant documentation in all the working languages six weeks before the opening of the sessions of the Council and its subsidiary organs, and invited the Secretariat to take steps to ensure effective compliance with rule 13, paragraph 4, of the rules of procedure of the Council. In resolution 1979/69, the Council decided to request the Secretariat to inform the Council and its subsidiary bodies, in the relevant annotated agenda, which documents had not been issued in accordance with the six-week rule, with a full explanation of the reasons that had prevented their circulation.

2. In view of the schedule of the thirty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development (9–19 February 1999), the documentation for that session should have been submitted to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services by 29 December 1998 and circulated by 25 January 1999.

* E/CN.5/1999/1

99-01626 (E) 250199

Annex

Status of documentation as at 22 January 1999

Agenda item	*Title or description and symbol of document*	*Date of submission to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services*	*Actual or projected date of issue*
2	Provisional agenda (E/CN.5/1999/1)		Issued
2	Note by the Secretariat on the proposed organization of work (E/CN.5/1999/L.1)		Issued
3	Report of the Secretary-General on social services for all (E/CN.5/1999/2)	15 January	28 January
3	Report of the Secretary-General on further initiatives for the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development (E/CN.5/1999/3)		Issued
3	Report of the Secretary-General containing a preliminary assessment of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development (E/CN.5/1999/4)	16 December	27 January
3	Interim report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (E/CN.5/1999/5)	5 January	27 January
3	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Workshop on Ensuring Access to Social Services of Under-served Populations (E/CN.5/1999/6)		Issued
3	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Workshop on Innovations in the Delivery and Financing of Social Services (E/CN.5/1999/7)	2 November	25 January
3	Note by the Secretary-General on the International Year of Older Persons and follow-up arrangements (E/CN.5/1999/8)		Issued
3	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth (A/54/)	—	—
3	Report of the Secretary-General on the status and role of cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends (A/54/57)		26 January
3	Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/54/59)		29 January
4	Note by the Secretary-General on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001 (E/CN.5/1999/L.2)	—	—
4	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (E/CN.5/1999/9)		Issued
4	Note by the Secretary-General on the nomination of members of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (E/CN.5/1999/10)		Issued

United Nations E/CN.5/1999/L.4

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
16 February 1999

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Thirty-seventh session
9–19 February 1999
Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development: priority themes: social services for all

Elements for the agreed conclusions of the Commission

Submitted by the Vice-Chairperson of the Commission, Faith Innerarity (Jamaica)

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99-03975 (E) 170299

I. Introduction

1. Social services have positive externalities and synergies that enhance social and economic development. Investment in social services will contribute to social progress and cohesion, economic productivity, productive employment, civil participation and societal peace. It is of fundamental importance that national Governments provide social services, even and especially in times of economic recession. Furthermore, it is essential that the economic and fiscal policies pursued by Governments support and encourage the social goals that they advocate.

2. The primary responsibility for social services rests with national Governments. In many countries, the provision of social services also relies upon active citizens, non-governmental organizations and voluntary groups, as well as trade unions and private businesses, but Governments — through international, national, regional and local policies — have the main responsibility for creating an enabling environment to promote the establishment and maintenance of social services and to ensure equity in access to social services.

3. The Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development enumerates many different forms of social services, which may be grouped under three broad headings:

(a) Services to meet the essential needs of the entire population;

(b) Services which respond to needs that exist at different stages in an individual's lifespan;

(c) Services tailored to the requirements of population groups with specific needs.

II. General principles and goals

4. Ensuring that high-quality, basic social services are available to all must be a high priority for all Governments, requiring them to make those goals central political commitments, mobilizing the necessary political will and recognizing the importance of the rights to inclusion, accountability and participation.

5. In all countries, to a greater or lesser extent, social services are not available to all people at all times. In many countries, a major obstacle to the provision of social services is lack of development. Also, Governments and other social service providers face a changing environment which poses further challenges and calls for new ideas. The planning and provision of services should take into account changing family circumstances, changing roles for and demands on women, shifts in population age structure, and mass migration and displacement of people.

6. A major objective of social services is to facilitate greater equity and equality of opportunities for every member of society. Social services are essential to enable people to satisfy their basic human needs and to live lives of dignity, safety and creativity while participating fully in society. Services should be based on concepts of full participation and non-discrimination. Access to all social services should be ensured for those who are living in poverty, are disadvantaged or have special needs, in particular persons with disabilities and older persons. Services should be adapted to ensure they remain appropriate to the needs of those groups.

7. Services should be designed which both recognize and serve the specific needs of girls and women. Public agencies and non-governmental organizations should involve women at all stages of decision-making in the planning, management and delivery of social services. In developing countries especially, women often bear the brunt of responsibilities resulting from a general lack of social service provision. Policies should recognize their contributions and provide them support in those roles.

8. Policy concepts devised to enhance the creation and maintenance of services must take into account the differences in the social and economic development of individual United Nations Member States. Variations in the range and coverage of services among and within countries may reflect both different stages of development and different cultural situations. There are also important local, regional and national differences affecting the needs of different population groups, including the socially excluded and those living in poverty, and such differences should be reflected in policies and programmes.

III. Social services to promote social development

9. Those who provide or finance social services should scrutinize how, where, when and in what manner services are delivered. Policies should aim to ensure the integration of social services into a system which combines a wide range of different services that are coordinated with each other and thus provide complementary help and support. When approaches and practices have outlived their original

rationale or when needs have changed, innovation is called for, so that:

(a) The hours when services are available should correspond to user convenience. Timetables might be adjusted to make service provision more responsive to people's needs;

(b) Several services could be grouped around a basic service to respond to several needs at the same time;

(c) Services could be provided at non-traditional sites where people naturally congregate.

10. Older persons should be guaranteed full participation and non-discrimination in access to services which seek to ensure that they continue to have active lives and participate in society. Access to social services, adapted to the special needs of every person, ensures that older persons are able to grow old securely and with their dignity and independence preserved.

11. Persons with disabilities — and where appropriate their families and advocates — should have access to information regarding rights and available services, at all stages and in forms or formats which are accessible to them. Systems for social provision must not exclude or discriminate against people with disabilities, and should sustain an optimum level of independence and functioning. Where financially feasible, respite care and attendant services should be made available for families which include a person with disability.

12. Social services can play a vital role in national policies to prevent people from being forced to leave their home country for economic, social or environmental reasons; or to promote and facilitate the return of migrants. Receiving countries should guarantee equal access to social services for migrants who have been granted the right to reside permanently. They should also ensure that services take into account any special needs of those migrants and their families. Countries should offer special counselling services for those migrants and their families, in close cooperation with non-governmental welfare associations.

IV. Partnership

13. Governments have primary responsibility for ensuring that basic services are available to all. It is the responsibility of the State to guarantee social rights, and the public sector plays a key role in securing universal access by all people to social services. This does not imply that Governments are solely responsible for all service delivery, or that decisions about how services are delivered should be made by Governments alone. Civil society must play a major supportive role in planning, organizing and providing social services. Public authorities should cooperate with others in order to offer adequate coverage and a wide range of services to users. Decisions about services are properly made with the full involvement of all those who have a stake in them, with particular emphasis on users and local communities. The involvement of volunteers is particularly valuable.

14. There are many forms of partnership between the State and civil society. Depending on the circumstances, different options can be considered for how this partnership might take effect. In some instances, Governments may wish to be the main service providers and organize delivery directly with assistance from partners; in other cases, the role of Government might be to guarantee national minimum standards and enable other actors to take a more direct role in provision and delivery. Such other actors might include quasi-governmental agencies, cooperatives, civic groups, community and other non-governmental organizations, including religious communities, and the for-profit private sector. Partners should also always include the users or beneficiaries of the services to be delivered.

15. Partnership should be based on shared goals; a sense of equity among the partners; mutual acceptance of different views; joint decision-making, as appropriate; and joint commitment to the process. Partnership can be strengthened through institutionalized formal councils at the national and local levels which permit all interested groups to be represented. Such mechanisms can also reduce waste and the misuse of resources, and can promote monitoring and the provision of feedback concerning service delivery.

16. Partnership requires that all actors involved be held accountable both to one another and to the users of the services. It is important to establish standards for measuring service delivery, based on a common understanding of needs and desirable outcomes. Services should be evaluated on a continuing basis, and feedback should be provided and assessed. Special attention should be given to improving the quality of management of social services and the training of staff. It is advisable for non-governmental organizations to monitor their activities through appropriate mutually agreed mechanisms.

17. Particularly in many developing countries, people still lack access to the most basic services. Communities need to be able to participate in defining needs and planning new services, which can be achieved in part through the use of participatory poverty assessments.

V. Information

18. Access to information is an essential attribute of a democratic society and the basis for effective participation in decision-making, including decisions regarding the provision and financing of social services. Priority should be given to improving access to information for all people. Access to information should be seen as a social right. Information management is essential for planning and delivering appropriate, efficient and effective services. The design of services should automatically include provision for information-gathering, monitoring and evaluation. Information about available social services should be easy to find and easy to understand.

19. The possibilities created by technological advances for making information more widely available, particularly to the under-served and disadvantaged, should be fully explored and exploited. Partnership between government, civil society and the media, both public and private, should be encouraged. In particular:

(a) Public agencies should devote more resources to spreading the use of information technology;

(b) Efforts should be made to facilitate access to information technology for those who are home-bound, persons with disabilities, people in rural areas and groups with special needs who might otherwise be in danger of becoming marginalized.

VI. Resources and their effective use

20. It is important to synchronize economic and social policy so that social service provision furthers both social and economic objectives. All members of society benefit from an educated, healthy, informed, secure, responsible and tolerant citizenry. Spending for services thus benefits not only the users of services but the community at large, which is the principal justification for allocating appropriate resources from public revenue to provide social services. Public funding of basic social services is also essential to ensure equitable access. National general revenues should continue to be the principal source of public funds to finance social services, for reasons of equity, efficiency and reliability.

21. Public authorities normally face budgetary constraints, and possibilities for coping with those difficulties vary among countries. It remains necessary to ensure adequate sources of revenue. National Governments should explore new approaches, including restructuring national budgets, to acquire adequate financial resources for creating and securing social services that meet the basic human needs of all people. For example, during the last decade many countries have reduced the proportion of gross domestic product allocated to military expenditure. Reorientations of outlays allow allocation of increased financial resources to social services.

22. To expand revenues, various options are available: improving tax administration to reduce tax evasion and avoidance; broadening the tax base by, *inter alia*, increasing the share of direct taxes in the overall revenue mix; and reducing tax exemptions and rebates. The pool of resources could be further enlarged through the imposition of user fees and co-payments for certain services; obligatory contributions, such as payroll and social security taxes; insurance schemes; or various forms of public borrowing for investment, as appropriate.

23. The efficiency of current expenditure within the public sector could be improved by focusing on outcomes rather than inputs.

24. Resources also encompass the resources of the private sector and the not-for-profit and voluntary sectors. They comprise not only financial resources but also resources in kind: the time and effort that people devote to meeting their needs, and the skills, knowledge and capacities of people, including family networks and community-based organizations. Policies should be developed that allow all those resources, actual and latent, to be mobilized and deployed effectively.

VII. International dimensions

25. The external environment, through its impact on national economies, affects the capacity of countries to provide and expand quality social services, particularly through the constraints that an unfavourable external economic climate imposes on national budgets and the resources of other social actors. For developing countries in particular, progress in regard to the external debt, improvements in the terms of trade, more favourable trading regimes and more socially sensitive approaches to structural adjustment would create additional opportunities and would generate more of the resources required to expand and upgrade services, both public and private. International cooperation should also assist developing countries in ensuring the provision of basic social services during periods of economic and budgetary difficulty. Stabilization and structural adjustment packages must pay attention to social

needs and contribute to the provision of safety nets for the most vulnerable.

26. Recent efforts to reform structural adjustment programmes are welcomed, and the recognition that essential services need to be provided when retrenchment becomes inevitable should be more fully translated into action and implemented.

27. Globalization has meant that capital is increasingly mobile and industries are increasingly able to relocate easily. There is a danger of downward harmonization of social services and social protection as countries try to minimize the imposition of taxes on capital and industries that might otherwise relocate. More international attention and enhanced international discussion and cooperation is required to safeguard the revenue base of countries and their capacity to finance social services. Arrangements are required to strengthen international cooperation with regard to taxation so as to minimize tax evasion and avoidance and limit tax competition.

28. Current trends in levels of official development assistance (ODA) remain a cause for concern. Those trends need to be reversed, and countries are urged to renew efforts to reach the 0.7 per cent target for ODA, as well as to consider initiatives to channel additional resources into basic social services. Combining national resources with external assistance for that purpose — such as the 20/20 initiative — would be particularly valuable.

29. A growing number of issues are acquiring an international dimension, and international or at least regional coordination in the planning of services needs correspondingly greater attention. A study of how economic and social policies interact and sometimes diverge could be a valuable contribution to preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

30. The United Nations, the agencies of the United Nations system and other multilateral institutions play an important role in promoting high quality social services, and should be appropriately supported in their efforts. The expansion of the financing of social investments by multinational financial institutions, international and regional, is a positive development which deserves appropriate support, in particular to maintain the capacities of such institutions to lend at concessionary rates.

31. The Summit set such time-bound targets as achieving universal primary education by the year 2015 and specified improvements in infant, child and maternal mortality and life expectancy. The achievement of those commitments will require substantial improvement in access to and delivery, quality and financing of social services. The Commission recommends that the General Assembly reinforce those commitments at the special session by considering the national strategies and supportive international policies necessary for their achievement.

United Nations E/CN.5/1999/L.5

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
17 February 1999

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Thirty-seventh session
9–19 February 1999
Agenda item 3 (b)
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups

Croatia and Dominican Republic: draft resolution

International Year of Older Persons, 1999: towards a society for all ages

The Commission for Social Development,

Recalling the Proclamation on Ageing,[1] adopted on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the World Assembly on Ageing, in which the General Assembly, *inter alia*, decided to observe the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 52/80 of 12 December 1997, in which the Assembly decided to devote four plenary meetings at its fifty-fourth session to the follow-up to the Year, which should take place at an appropriate global policy-making level,

Welcoming recent contributions by Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to the Trust Fund for Ageing which continues to play a small but catalytic role in enabling developing countries to respond to the ageing of their populations,

Welcoming also the support provided by States to the United Nations Secretariat in developing an Internet-accessible database on policies and programmes on ageing, intended to facilitate the review and appraisal of the implementation of major international instruments on ageing,

Noting with satisfaction the efforts of the United Nations Secretariat to elaborate a framework for a long-term perspective strategy on ageing, including a research agenda for the twenty-first century, and policy approaches for a society for all ages,

[1] General Assembly resolution 47/5 of 16 October 1992, annex.

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1. *Acknowledges with appreciation* the note of the Secretary-General entitled "International Year of Older Persons and follow-up arrangements";[2]

2. *Acknowledges also with appreciation* the pioneering role of the non-governmental community in worldwide observances of the International Year of Older Persons and the International Day of Older Persons;

3. *Urges* States to present to the General Assembly at the four plenary sessions of its fifty-fourth session that are being devoted to follow-up to the Year, their national reports on observances of the Year, policy approaches to ageing, and best practices for a society for all ages;

4. *Requests* the United Nations Secretariat to incorporate, as feasible, the experiences, policies and best practices reported by States into a long-term strategy on ageing, encompassing periodic reviews, for the consideration of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session in the year 2001;

5. *Invites* the regional commissions, within their respective mandates, to participate in monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing[3] in their respective regions as well as to contribute to the development of a future long-term strategy on ageing;

6. *Urges* interested States, United Nations agencies and bodies, non-governmental organizations, research centres and the private sector to continue to support the United Nations programme on ageing in developing a long-term policy-oriented research agenda and in facilitating promotional and coordination activities for 1999 and beyond;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to solicit the views of States, non-governmental organizations and the private sector on updating the International Plan of Action on Ageing and on the desirability and feasibility of convening in the year 2002 a review of the outcome of the World Assembly on Ageing including the interrelationship of ageing and development;

8. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-eighth session on the implementation of the present resolution.

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[2] E/CN.5/1999/8

[3] See *Report of the World Assembly on Ageing, Vienna, 26 July–6 August 1982* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.16), chap. VI.

United Nations E/CN.5/1999/L.6

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
17 February 1999

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Thirty-seventh session
9–19 February 1999
Agenda item 3 (b)
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups

Portugal: draft resolution

The Commission for Social Development recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Policies and programmes involving youth

The Economic and Social Council

Recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 50/81 of 14 December 1995, by which it adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, annexed thereto, as an integral part of that resolution,

Noting especially that, in paragraph 123 of the Programme of Action, current regional and interregional conferences of ministers responsible for youth affairs in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Asia were invited to intensify cooperation among each other and to consider meeting regularly at the international level under the aegis of the United Nations to provide an effective forum for a focused global dialogue on youth-related issues,

Noting that, in paragraph 124 of the Programme of Action, youth-related bodies and organizations of the United Nations system were invited to cooperate with the above-mentioned conferences,

Recalling that, in paragraph 125 of the Programme of Action, the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System was invited to contribute to the implementation

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of the Programme of Action through the identification and promotion of joint initiatives to further its objectives so that they better reflected the interests of youth,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/55 of 23 July 1997 and General Assembly resolution 52/83 of 12 December 1997, in which the Council and the Assembly welcomed the invitation of the Government of Portugal to host the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held at Lisbon from 8 to 12 August 1998,

Welcoming the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, hosted by the Government of Portugal in cooperation with the United Nations, as well as the support of the Government of Portugal for the holding of the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, convened at Braga, Portugal, from 2 to 7 August 1998,

1. *Takes notes with appreciation* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond,[1] the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, adopted by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth,[2] and the Braga Youth Action Plan, adopted by the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System;[3]

2. *Calls upon* all States, all United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies, the regional commissions and the intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned, in particular youth organizations, to make all possible efforts towards the implementation of the Programme of Action and to consider, within its framework, the appropriate ways and means to follow up the Lisbon Declaration, also taking into account the reports of the second[4] and third sessions of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System held, respectively, in Vienna in 1996 and in Braga in 1998, in accordance with their experience, situation and priorities;

3. *Invites* all relevant United Nations programmes, funds, specialized agencies and other bodies within the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental organizations and regional financial institutions, to give greater support to national youth policies and programmes within their country programmes as a way to follow up the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System;

4. *Welcomes* the proposals made by the Secretary-General to strengthen the Youth Unit of the Secretariat[5] and requests that similar action be undertaken to strengthen the corresponding youth policy units and focal points throughout the United Nations system and to involve young people directly in the planning, implementation and evaluation of such activities;

5. *Encourages* the regional commissions to follow up the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System in their respective regions, in coordination with regional meetings of ministers responsible for youth and regional youth non-governmental

[1] A/54/59.
[2] A/53/378, annex I.
[3] A/53/378, annex II.
[4] A/52/80–E/1997/14, annex.
[5] A/54/59, para. 93.

organizations, and to provide advisory services to support national youth policies and programmes in each region;

6. *Endorses* the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth that 12 August be declared International Youth Day[6] and recommends that public information activities be organized at all levels to support the Day as a way to promote better awareness, especially among youth, of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond;

7. *Invites* the Secretary-General to participate actively in the effective follow-up to the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 52/83 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/55 and within the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond;

8. *Invites* States to consider hosting the second World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and therefore to take action within the responsible bodies of the United Nations system in order to do so;

9. *Calls upon* all States, all United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies, the regional commissions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to exchange knowledge and expertise on youth-related issues, upon setting up the ways and means to do so.

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[6] Document WCMRY/1998/28, chap. I, resolution 2